

REPORT OF THE
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON
MINORITY VETERANS



Annual Report

2013

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Subjects</u>	<u>Page</u>
Letter from the Advisory Committee Chair	5
<u>Part I</u> Executive Summary	7
<u>Part II</u> Summary of 2013 Recommendations	8
<u>Part III</u> ACMV 2013 Recommendations, Rationales, and VA Responses	9
<u>Part IV</u> Briefing Highlights – Washington, DC	19
<u>Part V</u> Site Visit Highlights – Chicago, Illinois,	21
<u>Part VI</u> Town Hall Meeting – Chicago, Illinois	22
<u>Part VII</u> Exit Brief with Hines VA Hospital, Chicago VARO Leadership, and Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery	23
Appendix A: Action Plans Follow Up: 2012 Action Plan Update Spreadsheet (As of July 2013) ACMV 2011 Report Action Plans (As of September 2012)	25
Appendix B: Action Plans Follow Up: 2011 Action Plan Update Spreadsheet (As of July 2013) ACMV 2011 Report Action Plan (As of September 2012)	32
Appendix C: Advisory Committee Biographies	37

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DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20420

September 11, 2013

The Honorable Eric K. Shinseki
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Shinseki:

I am deeply honored to be appointed as your Chair of the Advisory Committee for Minority Veterans (ACMV) and giving our committee members the opportunity to assess the needs of minority Veterans and their families. The 2013 annual report includes five recommendations which are reflective of key issues identified by the committee through briefings received at the Veterans Affairs (VA) Central Office, our Chicago site visit, and input from minority veterans at our town hall meeting.

With the changing demographics, our role on the Committee becomes vital in making the VA a reflection of a more diverse Veteran population that it serves. Current VA projections indicate that minority Veterans will be approximately thirty percent of the overall Veteran population by 2030 (Source: Vet Pop). In addition, the FY 2010 Annual Demographic Profile of the Department of Defense Active Duty and US Coast Guard Profile reflected that approximately thirty six percent of the active forces were minorities, and approximately forty-seven percent of active duty women were minorities. The high unemployment rate among minorities (source: Department of Labor, Labor Force Characteristic by Race and Ethnicity, 2011) emphasizes the importance of hiring Veterans. The Committee was very impressed with the VA's Veteran hiring initiatives. However, we encourage the VA to review to the high rate of "regrettable loses" of Veterans hired, and to also utilize industry proven best practices that promote retention.

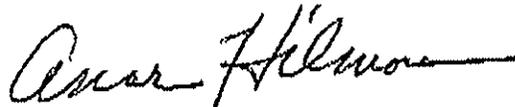
The ACMV's 2013 report includes focuses on the unique needs of minority Veterans and are in alignment with current VA initiatives. The Committee was pleased to see that progress is being made on addressing several reoccurring recommendations from prior annual reports. The three Administrations have incorporated action plans in their responses to committee recommendations. The Department of Veterans Affairs is making the necessary changes to be positioned to effectively manage present and future challenges to support a more diverse stakeholder population, which includes Veterans, their family members, and survivors. Based upon past recommendations, VA has established the Office of Health Equity, developed a methodology to produce appropriate minority Veterans data that will identify specific trends and patterns, and explored the causes for the ongoing lack of diversity within its Senior Executive Service

level. The ACMV also congratulates the VA for meeting its goal to hire additional mental health professionals. The Committee anticipates that current initiatives involving the new VA Office of Health Equity, and the anticipated publication of a Minority Veterans Utilization Report, will also greatly enhance services provided to minority Veteran stakeholders.

We have recently reviewed the responses to our 2013 recommendations provided to the Center for Minority Veterans. I draw your attention to the VBA response to recommendation 5, which references the Institute of Defense Analysis (IDA) 2009 review on Veterans that separated between 1990 and 2009. The response does not specifically indicate plans to initiate an updated demographic analysis. The actual response was, "VBA believes that any demographic analysis conducted in the future should again be conducted by a expert analytical organization such as IDA". The 2009 IDA report did not include data on Hispanic/Latino and Pacific Islander Veterans. This information should be segregated out in future reports to comply with the racial groups identified in Public Law 103-446. We request that VA conduct a demographic review in the IDA format that includes Vietnam Era and OEF/OIF Veterans by our original 2015 timeline.

As Chair of the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans, I would like to thank you and the Center for Minority Veterans for your ongoing support to our shared mission to meet the needs of those who have served our Nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Oscar Hilman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Oscar Hilman
BG, USA (Ret.)
Chair, Advisory Committee on
Minority Veterans

Enclosure

Part I. Executive Summary

Title 38 United States Code (U.S.C.), Section 544, is the requirement for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans (ACMV) to submit an annual report. The 2013 Annual Report of ACMV provides the Committee's observations, recommendations, and rationales that address the effectiveness of VA's delivery of benefits and services to minority Veterans. The report also provides Departmental responses and action plans to address the 2013 ACMV recommendations and a summary of the progress made on action plans from the 2011 and 2012 ACMV reports.

ACMV fulfilled its requirement to conduct a minimum of two meetings this year in accordance with Public Law 103-446, and the VA Charter on the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans dated March 17, 2010. ACMV met on November 14-16, 2012, at VA Central Office (VACO), and conducted a site visit in the Chicago metropolitan area April 23-25, 2013. During the meeting, ACMV received briefings from Veterans Health Administration (VHA), Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), National Cemetery Administration (NCA), and select staff offices. Ex Officio members from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Department of Defense (DoD), and Department of Interior (DOI) provided briefings on their respective missions and services provided to minority Veterans. During the Chicago site visit, the ACMV received briefings and facility tours at the Hines VA Medical Center (VAMC), the Chicago VA Regional Office (RO), the Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery, and the VA Joliet Community-Based Outpatient Clinic. On the evening of April 24, 2013, ACMV and leadership from the Hines VAMC, Jesse Brown VAMC, Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery, and the Chicago VARO responded to questions from minority Veterans and provided updates on current VA initiatives during a town hall meeting.

During this past year, ACMV reviewed information received during the meetings with VA officials, conducted document reviews, and communicated directly with minority Veterans. The Committee strongly believes that the five 2013 recommendations will significantly enhance VA's ability to strategically address the needs of minority Veterans. These recommendations along with rationales address the following issues:

- Enhanced Targeted Outreach;
- Succession Planning and Training Initiatives;
- Cultural Competency Training;
- Veteran Hiring and Retention; and
- Data Analysis and Benefits Utilization.

Part II. Summary of 2013 Recommendations

Recommendation #1: That the VA establish a standard that requires Minority Veterans Program Coordinators (MVPCs) in catchment areas that are comprised of large minority Veterans population of 30% or more, to perform a minimum of 20 hours of targeted outreach in minority communities per month. MVPCs in catchment areas with smaller minority Veterans populations of 25% or less are required to perform a minimum of 10 hours of targeted outreach per month, as defined by VA MVPC Handbook 0801, by the end of Fiscal Year 2014.

Recommendation #2: That the VA address the significant minority employee grade disparity in the GS/GM 11-15 pay grades, Title 38 equivalent pay levels, and SES positions by the end of Fiscal Year 2014.

Recommendation #3: That the VA implement a cultural competency training program for all mental health providers by the end of Fiscal Year 2015.

Recommendation #4: That the VA Office of Human Resources and Administration develop a methodology to determine the reasons/causes of removals/terminations (regrettable losses) of recently hired minority Veterans by the end of Fiscal Year 2014.

Recommendation #5: That VA expedite the collection and analysis of demographic data on minority Veterans to determine if disparities exist in the top five claimed conditions, grant rate for disability claims, and percentages of disability granted, and publish a report similar to the review that was recently completed on women Veterans by 2015.

Part III. ACMV 2013 Recommendations, Rationales, and VA Responses

Recommendation #1: That the VA establish a standard that requires Minority Veterans Program Coordinators (MVPCs) in catchment areas that are comprised of large minority Veterans population of 30% or more, to perform a minimum of 20 hours of targeted outreach in minority communities per month. MVPCs in catchment areas with smaller minority Veterans populations of 25% or less are required to perform a minimum of 10 hours of targeted outreach per month, as defined by VA MVPC Handbook 0801 by the end of Fiscal Year 2014.

Rationale: The MVPCs in large catchment areas need adequate time to plan and execute targeted outreach to fully address the needs of minority Veterans in their catchment areas. In the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2013, MVPCs in areas of high minority Veteran populations from the three VA Administrations conducted average monthly hours of outreach as indicated: (VHA-8, VBA-6, NCA-3). During our recent visit to Edward Hines Jr. VAMC, it was noted that the MVPC conducted outreach programs. However, her efforts were insufficient to cover the large number of minorities within the catchment area. This was especially true for Veterans in outlying rural areas. In our briefing with the Director of the Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery, he indicated that the MVPC spent little time in this role because of the need to complete primary duties of participation in burials. Additionally, MVPC Quarterly Reports reflect significant inconsistencies in the amount of time dedicated to targeted outreach activities. The lack of adequate time is also reflected in the quality of quarterly reports submitted.

According to VA Handbook 0801, the MVPC must maintain contact with the minority communities, participate in conference calls about their activities, share experiences with the group, keep minority Veterans informed about VA programs and services, and keep the leadership informed about minority Veteran issues. The appointed MVPCs need the flexibility to do targeted outreach and additional time to perform these collateral duties.

Action Office: VHA, VBA, NCA

VA Response: Concur-in-Principle

VHA concurs in principle that a Minority Veterans Program Coordinator (MVPC) in a catchment area comprised of a large minority Veterans population should perform targeted outreach; however, establishing a minimum number of hours to conduct targeted outreach may not be necessary. MVPCs should have adequate time to plan and conduct outreach activities. These outreach activities are designed to fully address the needs of minority Veterans. VHA fully supports VA Handbook 0801, which requires the VAMC Directors to provide MVPCs with sufficient time to perform their duties; however, each VAMC's catchment area may differ with respect to minority Veteran population. The amount of time allocated to MVPC activities is affected by the following: MVPC work-load, facility financial resources, and size of catchment area. A specific requirement determining a minimum amount of time allocated to targeted

outreach could be burdensome. The VAMC Director and MVPC may not be able to predetermine the number of hours to be allocated to targeted outreach each month due to factors outside of their control. The VAMC Director and MVPC should be given the flexibility to develop targeted outreach plans for minority Veterans, which could mean more or less targeted outreach hours each month, depending upon the existing conditions.

VAMC Directors and MVPC meet periodically to discuss operation plans, initiatives, and the amount of time and resources necessary to address the needs of minority Veterans in the catchment area. VHA leadership will closely monitor and strongly encourage VAMC Directors to work with MVPCs, and when available, provide more resources for the development of outreach strategies. VHA leadership will continue to make subject matter experts (SME) available to VAMC Directors and MVPCs to provide meaningful data in targeting minority Veterans. For example, VAMC Directors and MVPCs will have access to VHA Office of Rural Health SMEs to assist in identifying minority Veterans in rural and highly rural areas.

The MVPC Quarterly Report may not adequately describe and measure the number of hours MVPCs are actually conducting outreach. Informal discussions with Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) and VAMC staff suggest that inadequate record keeping and administrative training in completing the operation plan are a contributing factor to accurately recording outreach activities. We would encourage the Center for Minority Veterans to provide additional training, not only to VAMC MVPCs, but to VISN administrative staff who are involved in the VAMC concurrence process. Additional training, we believe, will improve the quality of the operation plan submitted to VACO and better reflect the numbers of hours MVPCs are actually conducting outreach.

NCA supports the concept to establish outreach goals for MVPCs based on the demographics of the Veteran populations being served; however, NCA is not able to implement the specific minimum standards in the manner recommended by the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans (ACMV). NCA met with VA's Center for Minority Veterans to propose an alternative plan to establish outreach goals that are tailored to each VA national cemetery. At VA cemeteries, the MVPC function is fulfilled as a collateral duty. MVPC's ability to accomplish program objectives is influenced by the cemetery's overall staffing size. Across NCA, cemetery staff ranges from one employee to more than 60 employees. Therefore, NCA will assess the effect of monthly outreach goals on cemetery staffing requirements and what goals should be established based on each cemetery's size, operational tempo, location, and demographics of the Veterans communities being served. An important consideration in establishing outreach goals will be each cemetery's operational status – that is, whether each cemetery is open or closed for first interments. NCA Central Office will assess these factors in coordination with the Memorial Service Network offices to establish cemetery-specific goals in the fiscal year (FY) 2014 Minority Veterans Program Coordinator Operations Plans. NCA's goals and progress for MVPC outreach will be monitored and reported to the VA Center for Minority Veterans as part of the scheduled quarterly reviews.

Concurrently, NCA has initiated several actions to help achieve the outreach goals which will be established in the Minority Veterans Program Coordinator Operations Plans. For example, NCA is developing a policy/practice that will require National Cemetery MVPCs to send a minimum of 10 invitations to different minority organizations in their local communities, inviting them to participate in cemetery programs and ceremonies. These activities will include Veterans and Memorial Day ceremonies, as well as dedications and other events held at national cemeteries throughout the country. Target organizations for the invitations will include Veterans Service Organizations, civic groups, local churches, and educational institutions. The Executive Diversity Council (EDC) and the Special Emphasis Program Advisory Committee (SEPAC) at NCA are having regularly scheduled meetings with committee members located Nationwide for the purpose of increasing workforce cultural competency and diversity. These efforts include linking EDC/SEPAC and regional MVPC activities as a method to intensify Veterans outreach and program efficiency. NCA MVPCs will be required to establish contact with a minimum of one new minority servicing organization quarterly, and collaborate with VHA/VBA counterparts to increase outreach opportunities. Implementation of these strategies along with current MVPC operations will position the administration to meet the goals that will be established and monitored quarterly with VA's Center for Minority Veterans.

Currently, the MVPCs in VBA's 56 regional offices conduct targeted outreach to minority Veteran populations within their catchment area through the use of census data and solicitation of national, local, and faith-based community organizations for outreach opportunities. VBA has made significant efforts to increase outreach to minority Veterans and continues to improve efforts by increasing the average number of outreach hours dedicated to the minority Veteran population. Since FY 2010, VBA has increased outreach hours by approximately 13 percent from 16 hours to 18 hours per month. VBA currently averages 18 hours per month across the Nation, regardless of the minority Veteran population size. VBA's national monthly average is within 2 hours of ACMV's recommended 20 hours per month. VBA does not believe it is necessary to establish a minimum standard but will continue to work to increase targeted outreach by MVPCs.

Recommendation #2: That the VA address the significant minority employee grade disparity in the GS/GM 11-15 pay grades, Title 38 equivalent pay levels, and SES positions by the end of Fiscal Year 2014.

Rationale: This objective and supporting plans to address grade disparity are depicted in the VA FY 2012 Management Directive 715 Report (pages 47-49). The initial target date for completion of the objective was 9/30/2012, but was shifted to 9/30/2013. As recent as November 2012, the Committee was informed that grade disparity continued to be a challenge. One plan to conduct root cause analysis of the top 5 occupations to determine barriers had a benchmark completion date of 9/30/2012 that was adjusted to 9/30/15.

On January 24, 2013, the VA Acting Assistant Secretary for Human Resources, in his National African American History Month memorandum, stated "African American/Black men still have a lower than expected participation rate at the GS 11-15 levels and SES pay levels, and African American/Black women have low participation rate at the GS 10, 12-15, and SES pay levels. VA will continue to market and encourage application of employees who are African American/Black and from other groups with low participation rates in career development and leadership programs. "

A recurring theme from previous ACMV reports 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011 is that there continues to be a lack of minorities in senior VA leadership levels, particularly the Senior Executive Service (SES). Since Fiscal Year 2006 to June 2013, there has been a net increase of 6 Hispanic males, 1 Hispanic female, 53 White males, 93 White females, 12 Black females, 6 Asian males, 4 Asian females, and 2 American Indian/Alaska Native females. During that same period, Black males remained at 16, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander males and females remained at 0, and American Indian/Alaska males decreased by 3. The VA June 2013 Diversity Report states: "When looking at conventional SES positions, the representation of Hispanic females, White males, Black males, Asian males and females, Native Hawaiian males and females, and American Indian males continues to be below the government average." This trend continues with minimal improvements identified.

The ACMV noted that VA has robust strategic and diversity and inclusion plans emphasizing minority-focused recruitment and development strategies, a best practices recruitment and selection guide, and more recently, a Hispanic Employment, Retention and Outreach Strategic Plan for FY 2013-2016. Further, VA has a Diversity Council, recruitment programs such as VA for Vets and multi-level career and leadership development programs for employee advancement through VA Learning University (VALU) such as MyCareer@VA. Yet, in spite of these numerous plans and programs, VBA, VHA, NCA, and VACO continue to be challenged in the senior level representation of minorities. This observation is supported with data published in the VA Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) Annual Reports for 2009, 2010, and 2011 and the Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan for FY 2012-2016, that shows marginal improvement in the representation of minorities in senior leadership positions.

Of particular concern, are the findings identified in ODI's February 2013 Hispanic Permanent Workforce Review, which not only shows declining rates of Hispanic male and female participation in the VA workforce, but also separation rates that are increasing and exceeding hiring rates. This is surprising, given that the Hispanic population grew by 43% from 2000-2010 and currently represents over 16% of the nation's population. If this trend is not reversed through effective implementation of VA's Hispanic Employment, Retention and Outreach Strategic Plan for 2013-2016; recruiting and hiring Hispanics into VA senior leadership levels will become a much greater challenge.

VA Response: Concur

VA concurs with ACMV's recommendation that the objective to address grade disparity is completed by the end of FY 2014. VA's Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) performs regular analyses of VA's workforce diversity by race, ethnicity, gender, and disability status. These analyses are reported to VA leadership on a quarterly basis, and to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission annually in VA's Management Directive (MD) 715 Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Plan and Report.

MD 715 provides policy guidance and standards for establishing and maintaining effective affirmative programs of equal employment opportunity under Section 717 of Title VII (PART A), and effective affirmative action programs under Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act (PART B). The Directive also sets forth general reporting requirements (PART C). The VA 2012 MD 715 Report reflects an agency-wide (VHA, VBA, NCA, Staff Offices) system for the evaluation of program effectiveness and barrier identification and elimination. The purpose of the report is to document that the agency has adequate data systems for effective analyses of applicant flow, on-board workforce, and personnel transactions data; and providing current guidance for the development of program plans to all component and field installations.

ODI identified grade disparity as a "trigger" that may suggest potential barriers to EEO in VA. Specifically, "In the GS/GM 11-15 and Title 38 equivalent pay levels, every group except White men have some disparity when compared to the distribution of the total VA permanent workforce participation rate in those grades." "In addition, certain groups (Black, Pacific Islander, American Indian, and Hispanic men) have a higher than average participation rate in Wage Grade occupations compared to the total workforce." The grade disparity trigger further identified two potential barriers that warranted address: These barriers were:

- There is not a focused outreach and recruitment plan that targets these groups for employment consideration at the higher pay grade, or no strategy for supporting these employees in qualifying for positions with promotion potential.
- There is a lack of applicant flow data to identify other potential barriers to upward mobility.

To address these barriers, ODI established a goal in the VA Diversity and inclusion Strategic Plan for FY 2012-2016 to "Build a diverse and high performing workforce that reflects all segments of society." (Goal 1 of VA Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan.) To attain this goal, VA established the following objective with 12 on-going supporting planned activities (VA 2012 MD 715 Report, pages 48-51):

Objective - "Perform additional analysis to identify other barriers, and also develop Career Pathways project and other training/developmental strategies to facilitate

upward mobility for employees at lower/dead-end careers. Conduct strategic targeted recruitment outreach for positions in the higher pay grades.”

To date, the following milestones have been accomplished toward meeting that objective:

- VA implemented the VA Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan aimed at eradicating barriers to EEO and diversity through the pursuit of 3 overarching goals, 8 aligned objectives, and 45 implementing strategies and performance metrics. ODI monitors VA's progress against this Plan on a quarterly basis.
- ODI developed and implemented the Hispanic Employment, Retention, and Outreach (HERO) Plan to address persistent underrepresentation of Hispanics in the VA workforce and in select occupational categories and grade levels. The Plan includes strategic targeted outreach to the Hispanic Veteran and student community, to achieve diversity in multiple dimensions. The HERO Plan is directly aligned with the VA Diversity and Inclusion Strategic goals, and is monitored by ODI on a regular basis.
- ODI implemented an applicant flow system for Senior Executive Service recruitment and development processes to identify barriers and adverse impact to diverse groups. Additionally, ODI is partnering with the Office of Personnel Management to implement a VA-wide applicant flow system to identify barriers to EEO in all VA recruitment processes. To date, VA is leading this effort Governmentwide.
- ODI launched a MyCareer@VA pilot project in partnership with VA Learning University to address grade disparities of diverse groups of employees, especially at the GS-9 and below levels and on Wage Grade occupations. The pilot was launched and completed at two VA Medical Centers (Martinsburg, West Virginia, and Washington, DC) and yielded very favorable results by program participants on the value of the Career Power mapping tool. ODI plans to perform follow-up surveys with pilot participants to ascertain the impact of the pilot on participants' career/grade progression. Based on the results, ODI will expand the pilot program to other facilities.

Recommendation #3: That the VA implement a cultural competency training program for all mental health providers by the end of Fiscal Year 2015.

Rationale: During the November 2012 briefing in Washington, DC, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) reported that cultural competency training is not mandatory for these newly hired professionals. Research shows that minority Veterans experience difficulties in receiving mental health services due to ineffective provider communication (insensitivity, mistrust and poor listening)¹ and cultural belief systems discouraging the use of mental health services. Minority cultures often do not look favorably on acknowledging mental illness or seeking help and treatment for mental health—a behavior that may be exacerbated by the warrior mentality of military service. In fact, the stigma of mental illness among some ethnic/racial minority groups may discourage people from seeking mental health care, medication and counseling.²

Therefore, illnesses like depression and PTSD may be left untreated which is problematic given that being an ethnic minority in the military may increase stress and stress reactions outside of combat exposure.³ In some cases, minority patients may rely on extended family, community, traditional healers and/or churches for help with mental health needs.⁴

To provide culturally competent care, mental health professionals should be aware of minority patient belief systems regarding mental health, and alternative treatments to ensure minority and rural Veterans receive diagnosis and culturally relevant treatment that result in positive outcomes. This cultural competence may need to include linguistically appropriate responses to incorporate the minority Veteran's family into the treatment modality.

VA Response: Concur-in-Principle

VHA agrees that mental health providers should have cultural competency training. VHA mental health providers generally receive cultural competency training as a requirement of their accredited graduate education programs in mental health disciplines. As such, additional cultural competence training as a mandatory requirement by the end of FY 2015 for VHA mental health providers is not necessary.

Recommendation #4: That the VA Office of Human Resources and Administration develop a methodology to determine the reasons/causes of removals/terminations (regrettable losses) of recently hired Veterans by the end of Fiscal Year 2014.

Rationale: According to the Fiscal Year 2012 Veterans Hire Demographics Separations report, there were a total of 6,747 removals, resignations and terminations from VA employment. In the briefings presented, the reason for this high number was unknown. Therefore, VA needs to identify why 40% of newly hired Veterans leave VA employment within 12 months of being hired. Although the latest unemployment rates for Veterans are improving, minority Veterans continue to lag behind in terms of employment. Therefore, it becomes important for VA to focus on its retention of Veterans.

A review of several studies which addressed employee retention indicated that recruiting and hiring a new employee could range from 50-150% of the annual salary of a retained employee.^{5,6} Therefore, retention is crucial in containing recruitment costs, while significantly contributing to lowering unemployment rates of deserving Veterans.

Further reported research for companies that used exit interviews or questionnaires with departing employees revealed the following information: the primary reasons for leaving were poor relationships and/or communications with one's supervisor, poor quality of co-worker or customer relationships, need for more work/life balance and low levels of employee engagement.⁷

VA Response: Concur

As stated in the 2011 Action Plan Recommendation 4, the Veterans Employment Services Office (VESO) provided an update and status report to ACMV. VESO has reviewed Veterans employment data and has contracted to have a Veterans Retention Study completed by the first quarter of FY 2014.

VESO Action Plan – Recommendation #4:						
Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status	
VESO contracted to have a Retention Study done by end of FY 2014.	VESO (OO6VE)			FY14, 1 st Qtr.	In Progress	

Recommendation #5: That VA expedite the collection and analysis of demographic data on minority Veterans to determine if disparities exists in the top five claimed conditions, grant rate for disability claims, and percentages of disability granted, and publish a report similar to the review that was recently completed on women Veterans by 2015.

Rationale: The availability and utilization of race/ethnic data will assist the VA to respond to the requirements of 38 U.S.C. section 544(c), which requires the ACMV to make “such recommendations (including recommendations for administrative and legislative action) as the Committee considers appropriate, and 38 U.S.C. section 317(d)(5), which will assist the Center for Minority Veterans to “conduct and sponsor appropriate research on the needs of Veterans who are minorities and to the extent to which programs authorized under this title meet the needs of those Veterans, without regard to any law concerning the collection of information from the public”. Until recently representative race/ethnicity data was not available. VA has developed methodology to collect demographic data which should provide an opportunity to conduct preliminary reviews.

In town hall meetings in Chicago, Illinois; San Antonio, Texas; and Fayetteville, North Carolina; minority Veterans have expressed the opinion that they feel that the percentage levels that they receive for disability, especially PTSD claims are significantly lower than that received by non-minority Veterans. VA officials during these town hall sessions have been able to describe the process of assessing disability levels, but have not been able to present actual data that would dispel this belief of potential disparities. The publication of a VA report would prove valuable in dispelling long standing perceptions of minority Veterans regarding the disability rating process.

VA Response: Concur-in-Principle

VBA concurs-in-principle with the recommendation regarding the importance of analyzing factors that could contribute to differences in disability compensation awards. In 2009, VBA contracted with the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) to study such differences, including differences among minority Veterans. IDA's report demonstrates the complexity of conducting such an analysis.

IDA pointed out that differences in average compensation do not necessarily imply unequal treatment of Veterans, and that answering the question of disparities or unequal treatment requires first examination of the factors that lead to a compensation award, and then determination of which of these factors are explained by characteristics of the Veterans and their applications rather than by VBA judgments and decisions. VBA believes that any demographic analysis conducted in the future should again be conducted by an expert analytical organization such as IDA.

The Office of Policy and Planning (OPP) may be able to assist VBA in an empirical analysis to determine if there is any evidence to support the perception of racial disparity in disability claims. OPP is currently reviewing race and ethnicity information available to the Department in an effort to determine its suitability for use in analysis. If OPP determines that it has reasonable data on race and ethnicity, staff can link it with VBA claims and award information to examine the perception of racial disparity.

OPP Action Plan					
Recommendation #5:					
Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status
4	VBA	OPP	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Assess race/ethnicity data.- Link with VBA data.- Evaluate combined data.- VBA collects and uses own data.		Pending

End Notes

1. Kamaka, M. L. (2010). Designing a cultural competency curriculum: asking the stakeholders. *Hawaii Medical Journal* 69 (6 Suppl 3): 31-34.
2. Primm, A.B., Vasquez, M.J.T., Mays, R.A., Sammons, O., Posey, D., McKnight-Eily, L.R., Presley-Cantrell, L.R., McGuire, L.C., Chapman, D.P., & Perry, G.S. (2010, January). The role of public health in addressing racial and ethnic disparities in mental health and mental illness. *Preventing Chronic Disease Public Health Research, Practice and Policy* 7(1): 1-7.
3. Loo, C.M. (2012). *PTSD Among Ethnic Minority Veterans*. Retrieved from <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/pages/ptsd-minority-vets.asp>.
4. Office of Minority and National Affairs, American Psychiatric Association. (2010). *APA Fact Sheet Mental Health Disparities: Hispanics/Latinos*. Retrieved from <http://www.bing.com/search?q=mental+health+disparities+hispanics%2Flatinos&src=IE-SearchBox&Form=IE8SRC>.
5. Mershon, Sarah. "The Importance of Employee Retention." National Strategic Selling Institute, Kansas State University, December 7, 2012.
6. Boase, Greg. "Effective Leadership Will Motivate Staff." WA Business News., January 30, 2013.
7. Soisson, Mike. "Five Ways to Decrease Recruiting Costs." Health Care Financial Management., July 6, 2012.

Part IV. Briefing Highlights

November 14-15, 2013 – Washington, DC, Administration Briefings

ACMV received the following briefings during the period covered by this report:

Wednesday, November 14, 2012 – (VACO Room 430)

- Ms. Barbara A. Ward, Director, Center for Minority Veterans (CMV) and Designated Federal Official (DFO), provided brief remarks and described her role as the DFO.
- Ms. Vivian Drake, Committee Management Officer, Office of Advisory Committee Management, and Hansel Cordeiro, Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) Attorney, briefed on VA advisory committee functions and FACA requirements.
- Mr. Jonathan Gurland, Attorney, Office of General Counsel, briefed on ethics and responsibilities of Special Government Employee.
- Mr. Robert Stanton, Ex-Officio, representing the Department of Interior (DOI), briefed on current DOI initiatives.
- Mr. Earl S. Newsome III, Deputy Director, CMV, briefed on CMV initiatives, review of past ACMV recommendations and status of action plans.
- The Honorable Allison L. Hickey, Under Secretary for Benefits, briefed on current VBA initiatives.
- Mr. Joseph Curtin, Director, National Outreach Office, Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs (OPIA), briefed on current outreach initiatives.
- Ms. Stephanie Birdwell, Director, Tribal Government Relations, OPIA, briefed on current initiatives, including Tribal Consultation.
- Mr. Pete Dougherty, Director, Homeless Veterans Program Office, OPIA, briefed on current initiatives to end homelessness.
- Dr. Robert L. Jesse, Principle Deputy Under Secretary for Health, VHA, briefed on current VHA initiatives and follow up on action plans related to VHA.
- Dr. Alfonso R. Batres, Chief, Readjustment Counseling Service, briefed on current initiatives.

Thursday, November 15, 2012 – (VACO Room 430)

- The Honorable Steve Muro, Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs, briefed on current NCA initiatives and follow up on status of action plans related to NCA functions.
- The Honorable John R. Gingrich, Chief of Staff, Office of the Secretary, provided brief remarks and update on current initiatives.
- Ms. Georgia Coffey, Deputy Assistant Secretary for ODI, briefed on VA diversity initiatives and follow up on action plans related to ODI.
- Mr. Dennis May, Director, VESO, briefed on mission and current initiatives.
- Ms. Chanel Bankston-Carter, National Director of Outreach, Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization, briefed on current Center for Veterans Enterprise initiatives.
- Dr. Betty Moseley-Brown, Associate Director, Center for Women Veterans, briefed on current mission and initiatives.
- Rev. E. Terri Lavelle, Director, Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, briefed on current mission and initiatives.
- Ms. Debra Walker, Director, Survivors Assistance Office, briefed on mission and current initiatives.
- Ms. Lisa Red, Director, Cultural Competency and Communication, Office of Health Equity, briefed on mission and planned initiatives.

Part V. Site Visit Highlights

Presentation Overviews – Chicago, Illinois, Site Visit, April 23, 2013

- Ms. Joan Richard, Director, Hines VAMC: The Director and her staff provided a tour of the facility and presented an overview of the medical center's mission and key functions/programs.
- Mr. Duane A. Honeycutt, Director, Chicago VARO: The Director and his staff provided a tour of the facility and an overview of their mission and key transformational initiatives.

Presentation Overviews – Chicago, Illinois, Site Visit, April 24, 2013

- Mr. Marty A. Fury, Director, Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery: The Director and his staff provided a tour of the facility and an overview of their mission and current initiatives.
- VA Joliet Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) - the Committee was provided a short tour of the CBOC and mobile outreach van that operated in rural areas in the catchment area.

Part VI. Town Hall Meeting – Chicago, Illinois, April 24, 2013

The ACMV hosted a Veterans Town Hall Meeting at St. Luke Church of God in Christ, on 914 North Orleans Street in Chicago. This provided a venue for Veterans' questions and comments. Local VA representatives answered numerous questions related to the claims process, employment opportunities, and various VA benefits and services. Veterans also made personal requests for assistance. Veterans asked the Committee to inform VA leadership that they were interested in the expansion of dental services. They also expressed that many Veterans perceived that minorities were awarded disability compensation levels at lower rates than non-minority Veterans. The Town Hall confirmed a need for ongoing targeted outreach activities to inform Veterans and their family members of availability and scope of VA programs.

**Part VII. Exit Brief with leadership form the Hines VA Hospital,
Chicago VARO, and Abraham National Cemetery, April 25, 2013.**

Exit Briefing Observations

Observations related to the Hines VAMC:

- The Committee noted that the VAMC had numerous programs in place to meet the clinical needs of Veterans from diverse periods of service and medical needs.
- The Hines VAMC appeared to be well maintained.
- All facility staff members demonstrated a commitment to provide excellent service to Veterans.
- The Hines VAMC and the Joliet CBOC were in areas readily accessible by public transportation.
- The Committee members identified opportunities for the MVPC to initiate outreach to several Native American Veteran groups in the catchment area.
- The Committee members encouraged the use of race/ethnicity data being incorporated in the reviews of participants in leadership training programs and recruitment actions to promote diversity in leadership positions at the medical center.

Observations related to the Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery:

- The Abraham Lincoln Cemetery is a very beautiful and well maintained facility.
- Its remote location poses a challenge to encourage Veterans and family members from the central city area and Chicago suburbs east of the city to access burial services.
- The Committee noted that only one minority candidate was interviewed for a staff position at the cemetery in over 10 years. This appears to be attributed to the remote location of the facility, but also highlights a need for programs to enhance recruitment of minorities and women to apply for positions at remote VA facilities.
- The cemetery leadership was asked to consider coordinating MVPC outreach activities on days that traditionally had fewer burials, and to collaborate as much as possible with the Hines VAMC and the Chicago VARO to provide burial benefits information to area Veterans.

Observations related to the Chicago VARO

- The facility is modern, well maintained, and utilizes state of the art security measures.
- The facility is located in close proximity to the Jessie Brown VAMC and public transportation. This promotes the use of the facility by local Veterans, especially those that use the facility in conjunction with scheduled appointments at the VAMC.
- During the town hall meeting, the VARO Director was able to explain the claims process, inform Veterans what was being done to address the claims backlog, and explained the benefits of submitting a fully developed claim and the use of eBenefits. Veterans at the town hall meeting appeared receptive to the information that was provided.

Note: Targeted outreach by the MVPC and other VA outreach staff is needed by minority Veterans in the Chicago area to help them address clinical, financial, and education challenges.

Appendix A: Action Plans Follow Up:

**2012 Action Plans Update Spreadsheet (As of July 2013)
ACMV 2012 Report Action Plans (As of September 2012)**

2012 Action Plans Update Spreadsheet*

Report Year	Recommendations	Program Office	Page	Status as of March 2013	Projected Completed Date as of March 2013	Current Status as of July 2013	Projected Complete Date as of July 2013
2012	Recommendation #1	VHA		Complete	Nonconcur	Complete	Complete
2012	Recommendation #2	VHA		In Progress	Narrative FY13	Complete	Complete
2012	Recommendation #3	VHA		In Progress	Narrative	Complete	Complete
2012	Recommendation #4	VHA		Complete	Nonconcur	Complete	Complete
		VA OCFM		In Progress	Concur	Complete	Complete
2012	Recommendation #5	VHA		In Progress	FY13	Complete	Complete
2012	Recommendation #6	VHA		In Progress	FY13	Complete	Complete
2012	Recommendation #7	VBA		In Progress	FY12,FY14	Complete	Complete
2012	Recommendation #8	VHA		In Progress	FY12	Complete	Complete
		VBA		In Progress	Quarterly, Ongoing, FY13	Complete	Complete
		NCA		In Progress	FY15	In Progress	FY 15
2012	Recommendation #9	VHA		In Progress	FY13	Complete	Complete
		VBA		Complete	Nonconcur	Complete	Complete
		NCA		In Progress	FY15	In Progress	FY 15
		ODI (06)		In Progress	FY12, FY13	In Progress	FY14
2012	Recommendation #10	VBA		Complete	Nonconcur	Complete	Complete
2012	Recommendation #11	VHA		Complete	No Action Plan	Complete	Complete
		VBA		Complete	No Action Plan	Complete	Complete
		NCA		Complete	No Action Plan	Complete	Complete

*The above grey areas indicate 2012 Action Plans as completed. Please refer to the FY 2012 ACMV Report to review the Recommendations, Rationale, and VA Response.

Reference: http://www.va.gov/centerforminorityveterans/Advisory_Committee.asp.

ACMV 2012 ACTIVE Recommendations and Rationales

Recommendation #8: VA officials from the three Administrations should ensure that Veteran's demographic data made available from local VA Minority Veterans Program Coordinators (MVPCs) is utilized by local individuals conducting outreach to conduct targeted outreach to all identified ethnic Veteran populations in their catchment areas.

VA Response: Concur

As a standard procedure since FY 2007, the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) has utilized the full spectrum of Veterans' demographical data available from the both the Census Bureau and VA's own data systems as a primary method to increase contact with minority Veterans. Since FY 2007, NCA's Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Office has sponsored training on how to best extract demographical data from the VHA Service Support Center (VSSC). All NCA Cemetery Directors, MVPCs, MSN Directors, and Human Resources (HR) Liaisons are trained where the information is located and how to retrieve it and are reminded to make full utilization of the data at every opportunity. Ms. Juanita Mullen, who is the American Indian Veterans Liaison at CMV, attends all NCA MVPC quarterly meetings to provide insight and best practices for implementing outreach and recruitment strategies for American Indian communities.

NCA continues to participate in events specifically targeting Native American and Asian American/Pacific Islander Veterans nationwide; during outreach events, participants are informed of the services and benefits provided to Veterans and their families by NCA. Some of the outreach events in the Texas area that NCA has participated in this fiscal year include: Heroes and Heritage Program/Career Fair, February 27, 2012; Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas; League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) National Women's Conference, April 13-14, 2012; Hilton Houston Oak, Houston, Texas; and the Gathering of Nations Pow Wow, April 27-28, 2012. In addition, NCA has participated in other events targeting these communities including Indian Traders Market, Albuquerque, New Mexico; Federal Asian Pacific Islanders Council, April 30- May 4, 2012, Hyatt Buckhead Hotel, Atlanta, Georgia; and the Society of American Indian Government Employees (SAIGE) 7th Annual Training Conference, June 3-8, 2012, Omni Interlocken Hotels and Resorts, Denver, Colorado.

Actions to implement:

NCA Action Plan – Recommendation #8					
Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status
Determine the effectiveness of current outreach strategies.	Office of Diversity and ADR Programs (40A)	HR/ Communications Outreach Office	Conduct a 3-year analysis of current outreach measures to targeted communities to determine the level of effectiveness.	FY 2013	In Progress
Ensure compliance with the critical elements as defined in VA Handbook 0801.					
Revamp NCA MVPC Program.	Office of Diversity and ADR Programs (40A)		<p>Step 1 - Acquire additional information from the Veteran population to evaluate the effectiveness of outreach programs.</p> <p>Step 2 - Draft NCA MVPC Standard Operating Procedure (SOP).</p> <p>Step 3 - Develop and implement MVPC Certification Program.</p>	FY 2013	In Progress
Develop a Special Emphasis Program.	Office of Diversity and ADR Programs (40A)		<p>Establish a nationwide special emphasis committee.</p> <p>NCA Special Emphasis Program Advisory Committee (SEAPAC)</p>	FY 2013	In Progress
Develop and implement a cultural competency program at NCA.	Office of Diversity and ADR Programs (40A)		<p>Identify and address cultural competency skill gaps in administration's workforce:</p> <p>Step 1 - Draft cultural competency program action plan.</p> <p>Step 2 - Implement Plan.</p> <p>Step 3 - Measure program effectiveness.</p>	FY 2013	In Progress
Improve Veterans' awareness of burial and memorial benefits.	Management Support and Communication Services (41A)		Increase the percentage of Veterans who have heard about burial in a national and State or Tribal Government Veterans cemetery to 75 percent.	FY 2015	In Progress

Recommendation #9: VA regional administrators should monitor staff recruitment efforts with a goal of hiring staff that are diverse and reflective of the Veteran population.

VA Responses: Concur

As a part of the MVPCs normal outreach duties, they provide Veterans a copy of NCA's brochure with information on how to apply for employment opportunities at NCA. In FY 2012, NCA offices nationwide have participated in several outreach events specifically targeting Native American Veterans and Asian American/Pacific Islander Veterans. As a practice, NCA utilizes these opportunities for recruitment to further diversify the workforce as well as increasing minority participation in the services and benefits that we provide. Some of the measures NCA has taken to improve Native American Veterans and Asian American/Pacific Islander Veterans' participation so far in FY 2012 include the Under Secretary, Mr. Muro, as well as other NCA executives serving as guest speakers at events focusing on outreach and recruitment of these targeted groups, including the White House Asian American Pacific Islander Roundtable, and the Tribal Governments Consultation in Washington, DC.

In addition, NCA has participated in outreach at events in Texas such as the Heroes and Heritage Program/Career Fair, February 27, 2012, Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas, and the LULAC National Women's Conference, April 13-14, 2012, Hilton Houston Oak, Houston, Texas. Through NDIP, NCA provides opportunities for students from the Organization of Chinese Americans (OCA), the Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies (APAICS), and the International Leadership Foundation (ILF) to gain Federal job experience for ten weeks. This program serves as a very useful long range recruiting tool. In FY 2012, several of the NDIP interns were obtained through Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) outreach. NCA has established partnerships with the ILF, APAICS, and OCA to sponsor students throughout the year at various cemetery locations nationwide.

The Veterans Cemetery Grants Program conducts quarterly conference calls and e-mails program updates to state cemeteries and other organizations about pending grants. Individual conference calls have been conducted with Hawaii and Guam providing guidance on their pending project; this initiative ensures funding and additional employment opportunities for Asian American/Pacific Islander communities. In FY 2012, two Tribal grants have been approved and another is pending.

Actions to implement:

NCA Action Plan – Action Plan – Recommendation #9					
Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status
Develop long range recruitment programs to increase opportunities for Veterans and students with disabilities.	Office of Diversity and Alternative Dispute Resolution Programs (40A)	Human Resource	<p>Step 1 - Develop standard Memorandum of Understanding with educational institutions that have horticulture educational programs.</p> <p>Step 2 - Recruit students with disabilities from educational institutions and Veterans across the spectrum.</p> <p>Step 3 - Increase participation in the NDIP by 2 percent each year.</p> <p>Step 4 - Collaborate with the Veterans Employment Services Office (VESO) to identify partnership opportunities.</p> <p>Step 5 - Quarterly monitor Veteran hiring and separation data to determine any triggers.</p>	FY 2012/ FY 2015	In Progress
Execute FY 2012 Veterans Cemetery Grant Operating Plan.	Cemetery Grants Program		Establish 29 new State and Tribal Government Veterans cemeteries.	FY 2015	In Progress
Execute FY 2012 Veterans Cemetery Grant Operating Plan.	Cemetery Grants Program		Increase the percentage of Veterans served by a burial option in a national, State, or Tribal Government Veterans cemetery to 94 percent.	FY 2015	In Progress
Determine the effectiveness of current outreach strategies.	Office of Diversity and Alternative Dispute Resolution Programs (40A)	Human Resource, Communications Outreach Office	Conduct a 3-year analysis of current outreach measures to targeted communities to determine the level of effectiveness.		In Progress
ODI Action Plan – Action Plan – Recommendation #9					
Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status
VA field facilities will develop and execute targeted recruitment outreach and	Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) (06)		VA field facilities will create partnerships with VA stakeholders, affinity groups (including VA chapters), state and local government agencies, Veterans/community	4th quarter FY 2013	In Progress

<p>communications strategies to market jobs to diverse populations. Those strategies will be captured and reported in the required annual EEO/affirmative employment plans and reports.</p>			<p>organizations, professional organizations, and student associations on a national/regional level. Market/communicate VA job opportunities and related information to affinity groups, colleges/universities and professional organizations that service the targeted communities. Those efforts will be reported and monitored via annual EEO report and plan reviews, which are accomplished at the regional and Administration level. Will be reported in annual MD 715 and other required EEO reports/plans.</p>		
<p>The Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) will collaborate with the Strategic Communications and Outreach Service (SCOS), Center for Minority Veterans (CMV), Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM), Center for Women Veterans (CWV), and Veterans Employment Services Office (VESO to develop a strategic outreach plan that focuses on recruitment and outreach initiatives.</p>	<p>Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) (06)</p>		<p>Develop Recruitment and Outreach Committee. Meetings with CMV, CWV, OHRM, and VESO are TBD. Attend recruitment events in various communities that include a variety of geographic regions to increase the opportunities to recruit from a diverse, broad field of potential applicants. A charter has been prepared and reviewed by key stakeholders and in the process of coordinating approval and signature signature. ODI attended and participated in several recruitment events</p>	<p>4th quarter FY 2013</p>	<p>In Progress</p>
<p>Conduct Technical Assistance Reviews (TAR) with field offices to ensure they are conducting targeted recruitment outreach and that their</p>	<p>Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) (06)</p>		<p>ODI will conduct annually a minimum of 6 TARs. Will be reported in annual MD 715 and other required EEO reports/plans. 6 TARs were conducted in FY 2013.</p>	<p>4th quarter FY 2013</p>	<p>Completed</p>

<p>respective EEO/affirmative employment and workforce succession plans contain recruitment outreach and communication strategies to address low participation rates.</p>					
<p>Leverage use of Special Emphasis Program Managers (SEPM) serving on the front lines.</p>	<p>Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) (06)</p>		<p>Provide continuous training to SEPMs via VA agency forums conducted at national affinity conferences. Training will provide information on data related to VA's workforce demographics; recruitment outreach best practices; special hiring authorities; diversity internship programs; and career development and leadership program opportunities. Will be reported in annual MD 715 and other required EEO reports/plans.</p>	<p>4th quarter FY 2013</p>	<p>Recurring (as needed basis)</p>

**Appendix B: Action Plans Follow Up: 2011 Action Plan Update Spreadsheet
(As of July 2013)
ACMV 2011 Report Action Plans (As of September 2012)**

2011 Action Plan Update Spreadsheet*

Report Year	Recommendations	Program Office	Page	Status as of March 2013	Projected Completed Date (Date/NA)	Status as of July 2013	Projected Completed Date as of July 2013
2011	Recommendation #1	NA			Nonconcur		
2011	Recommendation #2	VHA		Complete		Complete	Complete
		VBA		Complete		Complete	Complete
		NCA		In Progress	FY15		
		ODI (06)		Complete		Complete	Complete
2011	Recommendation #3	VHA		In Progress	FY13	Complete	Complete
		VBA		Complete		Complete	Complete
		NCA		In Progress	FY13	Complete	Complete
		NVO(002 D)		In Progress		Complete	Complete
		VECS (006VE)		In Progress	FY13	Complete	Complete
2011	Recommendation #4	VHA		In Progress	FY13	Complete	Complete
		VBA		In Progress	FY13		
		NCA		In Progress	FY13	Complete	Complete
		VECS(006 VE)		Complete		Complete	Complete
2011	Recommendation #5	VHA		In Progress	FY13	Complete	Complete
		VBA		Complete		Complete	Complete
		NCA		In Progress	FY13	Complete	Complete
2011	Recommendation #6	VHA		Complete		Complete	Complete
2011	Recommendation #7	VHA		5 Complete		Complete	Complete
		VBA		Complete		Complete	Complete
		NCA		In Progress	FY15		
2011	Recommendation #8	VHA		Complete		Complete	Complete
2011	Recommendation #9	VHA		Complete		Complete	Complete
2011	Recommendation #10	VHA		Complete		Complete	Complete
2011	Recommendation #11	VHA		Complete		Complete	Complete
2011	Recommendation #12	VHA		Complete		Complete	Complete
2011	Recommendation #13	CMV		Complete	*See Note below	Complete	Complete

*The above grey areas signify the 2011 Action Plans as Completed. Please refer to the FY 2011 ACMV Report to review the Recommendations, Rationale, and VA Response.
Reference: http://www.va.gov/centerforminorityveterans/Advisory_Committee.asp.

Follow-up Remarks by Center for Minority Veterans: 2011 ACMV Report - Recommendation #13

ACMV 2011 ACTIVE Recommendation

Recommendation #2: Review the current diversity and inclusion training and update the training modules, by the end of FY 2011, to include the topics of cultural competence and emotional intelligence to ensure that they are relevant to address the Diversity and Inclusion challenges that are present in the VA.

VA Response: Concur-in-principle

Actions to Implement

** Pending = suspense date established and being monitored.*

NCA Action Plan – Recommendation #2					
Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	*Current Status
Develop a culturally competent workforce.	Office of Diversity Management and ADR Programs (40A)	Human Resources/ Labor Relations	Identify and address cultural competency skill gaps in the administration's workforce.	4 th quarter FY 2012	Pending
Develop a Special Emphasis Program.	Office of Diversity Management and ADR Programs (40A)		Establish a nationwide special emphasis committee.	4 th quarter FY 2012	Pending
Develop strategies to create an overarching Human Capital Plan that will include a culturally competent work environment.	Office of Diversity Management and ADR Programs (40A)	Human Resources/ Labor Relations	Create an overarching Human Capital investment architecture for NCA.	4 th quarter FY 2012	Pending

Recommendation #7: Develop an action plan to increase access to VA programs and services (VHA/VBA/NCA), and facilities for Veterans living in rural and outlying territories (insular areas) by 2nd Quarter FY 2012.

Rationale: During the Advisory Committee meeting, a member of the committee who resides on Guam provided an update on the needs and challenges for insular areas as follows:

1) Guam

Veterans face numerous challenges in accessing health care:

- There is no locally based Wounded Warrior or Residential Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (BTI) treatment program.
- Returning Veterans with chronic PTSD, TBI had to wait receiving service connection category of at least 30% for the VA to cover transportation to Hawaii, and this process takes up to six months.
- There are no providers for Agent Orange and other Specialty Exams.
- There is no Home-Based Primary Care Program.
- There is no Skilled Nursing Facility and Long-Term Care Community Living Center.
- The recently constructed Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) is too small to accommodate the number of Veterans seeking care.

To address these issues, VHA needs to allocate adequate resources and hire skilled and qualified personnel. Collaborating with DoD to use space for Veterans within the new Naval Hospital to be built on Guam may be one integrated solution.

Space available in Veteran cemeteries is rapidly dwindling:

- The cemetery will be completely filled by 2012.
- No additional in-ground burials unless the coffin is oversized or it is a married couple.

To address this issue, NCA needs funding to perform environmental and geological testing on a new site immediately.

Homeless Veterans: "Migrant" Veterans from off-island and on-island (homeless Veterans and family going from family to family and staying with them) are increasing in numbers.

It soon may be necessary to increase the number of vouchers for homeless Veterans to accommodate the needs and use space from the soon to be built Naval Hospital.

2) Saipan

Veterans face numerous challenges in accessing health care and benefits:

- VA has rented a space for the Rural Outreach Clinic, but the facility has
- Neither personnel nor equipment (furniture, computers, etc.) in it.
- Veterans often must pay out-of-pocket to be seen on Guam for their service-connected ailments. Itineraries are mailed but do not reach them on time.
- VA toll-free numbers do not work with the exception of 800-827-1000, so
- Veterans cannot conveniently call for questions regarding health, GI Bill, or Memorial Services.

Given these challenges, it is essential that the relevant VA offices collaborate to fully evaluate the needs of minority Veterans in insular areas and develop an action plan to close these aforementioned gaps.

VA Response: Concur

Actions to Implement

** Pending = suspense date established and being monitored*

NCA Action Plan – Recommendation #7					
Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	*Current Status
Execute FY 2011 Veterans Cemetery Grant Operating Plan.	NCA Veterans Cemetery Grant Service (40)		Award grants for all projects on the FY 2011 operating plan.	4th quarter FY 2011	Pending
Expand burial access for rural Veterans.	NCA Finance and Planning (41B)		Develop new rural policy for the Secretary's consideration.	4 th quarter FY 2011	Pending
Improve Veterans' awareness of burial and memorial benefits.	NCA Memorial Program Services (41A1)		Increase the percentage of Veterans who have heard about VA's headstones and burial markers in private cemeteries to 60 percent.	1 st quarter FY 2015	Pending

Recommendation #13: Propose legislation that will change the requirement for an annual report from the ACMV to a biennial report.

Rationale: Currently Public Law 103-446 requires the ACMV to submit an annual report to the Department by July 1st of each year, and that report with the Department's responses to the ACMV recommendations is due to Congress on September 1st of each year. The ACMV conducts its annual Washington, DC meeting normally within the first quarter of the fiscal year, and its site visit in the third quarter of the fiscal year. Therefore, the current timeframe precludes ample time for the Department to develop initiatives in response to the recommendations that can be reported during the ACMV's annual meeting in Washington, DC and be made part of the minutes reflected in the annual report. A biennial timeframe would allow the Department more time to develop, measure, and document initiatives that have been taken in response to the ACMV recommendations.

VA Response: Concur

CMV will submit a proposal to change the requirement for the ACMV Annual Report to a biennial requirement subsequent to receiving concurrence from appropriate staff offices and approval by VA leadership. The request will be submitted in the spring of 2012 with the FY 2014 legislative proposals.

** Pending = suspense date established and being monitored.*

VA Action Plan – Recommendation #13					
Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	*Current Status
Submit proposal to change ACMV Annual Report to become a biennial report beginning in FY 2013.	Center for Minority Veterans (00M)	Office of General Counsel Advisory Committee Management Office	Secure concurrence from OCLA, ACMO, OGC	4th quarter FY 2011	Pending
			Submit proposal for change to in reporting requirement by end of 1 st Quarter FY 2012	1st quarter FY 2012	Pending

The CMV submitted a request to the VA Legislative Review Panel (LRP) to have the ACMV Report changed from an annual report to a biennial report. The proposal was identified in this review cycle by a designation of: 00M-2, NEW, Requirement for Biennial Report on Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans. The Departmental LRP approved the recommendation. Therefore, the proposal will be transmitted for consideration so that the potential costs of approved legislative proposals can be incorporated into VA's Congressional Budget Request. The potential of a favorable outcome of this request for a biennial report would result in ACMV submitting its final annual report in FY 2013, no annual report being submitted in FY 2014, and the first biennial report being submitted in FY 2015.

Appendix C: Advisory Committee Biographies

Clara L. Adams-Ender General (Retired), U.S. Army African American

General Clara L. Adams-Ender is President and Chief Executive Officer of Caring About People with Enthusiasm (CAPE) Associates, Inc., a management consulting and inspirational speaking firm. She received her baccalaureate degree in nursing from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, Greensboro, North Carolina; a Master of Science Degree in Nursing from the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota; and a Master of Military Art and Science degree from the Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. She has also been awarded twelve honorary doctorate degrees in law, public service, humane letters, and science.

General Adams-Ender rose from a staff nurse in the Army Nurse Corps to become chief executive officer for 22,000 nurses, a Brigadier General and Director of Personnel for the Army Surgeon General. She was Vice President for Nursing at the prestigious Walter Reed Army Medical Center, and was the first female in the Army to be awarded the Expert Field Medical Badge. She also commanded an army post, a position equivalent to city manager, magistrate and mayor of a city.

General Adams-Ender is a past Chair, Board of Directors, Andrews Federal Credit Union, and a former member of the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services. She was selected as Chair, Board of Directors, THE ROCKS, INC., and appointed to the Board of Medicine of the Commonwealth of Virginia. She has received many awards for her community service, including the Roy Wilkins Meritorious Service Award of the NAACP, the Regents Distinguished Graduate Award of the University of Minnesota, and the Lifetime Achievement Award of the National Black Nurses Association. General Adams-Ender resides in Virginia.

Brigadier General Tom L. Daniels, U.S. Air Force (Retired) African American

General Daniels began his military career in 1965 when he enlisted in the Air Force. He served combat tours in Vietnam in 1968 and 1969. In addition to his combat tours in Vietnam, he served in a humanitarian mission in Vietnam and Laos. General Daniels' military experience includes serving as the Assistant Adjutant General for the Oklahoma National Guard; Executive Officer to The Adjutant General, Nebraska National Guard, and Director of Personnel Policy for the Office of the Secretary of Defense. General Daniels is a tireless advocate for the equitable treatment of Veterans at the state and Federal level. He is a strong supporter of Junior ROTC programs in the Fort Worth school system as well as promoting aerospace and aviation opportunities for minorities.

He earned his Bachelor's degree from Oklahoma Central State University and his Masters degree from Troy State University. He is also a graduate of the Personnel

Officer Course, Air Command and Staff College, Air Force War College, and Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. General Daniels resides in Texas.

**Petty Officer First Class Elisandro (Alex) T. Diaz, U.S. Navy (Reserve)
Hispanic**

Mr. Diaz has served 13 years in the United States Navy Reserve as a Combat Photographer. He has served two tours of duty in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He is currently the founder, editor, and publisher of "The Orange County (OC) Sentinel" magazine and owner of Alex Diaz Productions. The OC Sentinel disseminates information on benefits, resources, and events relevant to Veterans, active duty military members, their families, civic leaders, and the community at large.

Mr. Diaz has over 14 years of professional experience as a mortgage officer and real estate agent. He currently serves on the Board of the Orange County Home Ownership Prevention Collaborative; with an emphasis on helping Veterans preserve their homes. In addition, Mr. Diaz currently serves as the Commander of the American GI Forum's Rudy Escalante Chapter. He has played an active role in several Veteran events in his community to include: serving as the Public Affairs Officer for the Inaugural Orange County Homeless Veterans Stand Down; organizing committee-member for the Moving Wall's visit to Garden Grove, California; and facilitated a Veterans Conference at Santa Ana College. Mr. Diaz resides in California.

**Thanh (Tino) N. Dinh, U.S. Air Force
Asian American**

Mr. Dinh currently serves as Senior Consultant and Chief Operating Officer for the Odin Group. The Odin Group is a Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business and certified Minority Business Enterprise that specializes in management consulting and technology services. In this capacity, Mr. Dinh was responsible for co-authoring a long term strategic plan for VBA that focused on new initiatives designed to transform the existing VA claims processing operation. Prior to his employment with the Odin Group, Mr. Dinh served as a consultant with BearingPoint, Booz Allen Hamilton, and Computer Sciences Corporation.

Mr. Dinh served as a Coalition Liaison Officer to Iraqi Military Headquarters. His responsibilities included advising three North Atlantic Treaty Organization delegations and U.S. State Department on security challenges of Iraqi staff. While deployed to the Republic of South Korea, Mr. Dinh improved the traditional methods of reporting targets between the U.S. Air Force, U.S. Army and Republic of South Korea Air Force Units. In addition, Mr. Dinh served as the sole ROTC recruiter in Houston, Texas, awarding more than \$500,000 in scholarships. Mr. Dinh is a tireless advocate for Veterans. He is active in several Veterans Service Organizations to include Japanese American Veterans Association, Vietnamese American Armed Force Association, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, and the Air Force Academy Society of Washington, DC. He has played an integral role in planning and organizing Veteran events to

include the Third Annual Vietnamese American Armed Forces Association Fallen Heroes Scholarship. In addition to his outreach to the Veteran community, Mr. Dinh also serves as a volunteered teacher at Radford High School for the Pacific and Asian Affairs and serves as the economic Development co-chair for the Vietnamese American Leadership Summit.

He earned his Bachelor of Science in Foreign Area Studies from the U.S. Air Force Academy and his Master of Business Administration from the University of Virginia. Mr. Dinh resides in Virginia.

**Oscar B. Hilman, Brigadier General (Retired), U.S. Army
Asian American**

General Oscar Bautista Hilman was born in the Republic of Philippines. He graduated from Central Washington University, and he received his Masters of Science Degree in Strategic Science from the United States Army War College. He received his commission through the Officer Candidate School in 1977. He was a Sergeant First Class (E-7) when he received his commission. His military education includes Armor Basic and Advanced Courses, Combined Arms Services Staff Course, United States Army Command and General Staff College, Tank Commander Course, Total Quality Awareness Course, United States Army War College, and a number of Logistics, Contracting, Procurement, Internal Review, Comptroller, and Resource Management Courses. He served as Commander of the 81st Brigade Combat Team in support of Iraqi Freedom II, and retired as Deputy Commanding General, I Corps and Fort Lewis. His awards and decorations include: Legion of Merit with Oak Leaf Cluster, Bronze Star Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Meritorious Service Medal with 4 Oak Leaf Clusters, and Army Commendation Medal with 2 Oak Leaf Clusters, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Humanitarian Service Medal, and the Combat Action Badge. General Hilman is the 2010 recipient of the Outstanding American by Choice Award. An initiative which highlights the importance of citizenship rights and responsibilities through recognition of the outstanding achievements of naturalized U.S. citizens.

He is the President of the Filipino Community Alliance of Pierce County and a member of numerous military and Veteran's organizations like Pan Pacific American Leadership and Mentoring (PPALM) and American Coalition for Filipino Veterans (ACFV). In 2012, he was appointed as the Chairman of the Advisory Committee of Minority Veterans.

General Hilman resides in Tacoma, Washington, with his wife Patty.

**Harold Hunt, U.S. Army
Native American**

Mr. Hunt served over 9 years in the U.S. Army as Light Infantryman. He was awarded the Purple Heart for military merit while serving in the 199th Light Infantry Brigade, Republic of South Vietnam. Mr. Hunt served as the Veterans Service Officer for Robeson County, North Carolina. In addition, he has served as a Service Officer for the National American Indians Veterans, Inc.

Mr. Hunt has served as Post and District Commander for the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Past Chief of Staff Military Order of the Purple Heart State of North Carolina, and a member of the American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Lumbee Warriors Association, and National Association of County Veterans Service Officers. Mr. Hunt currently volunteers as the Veterans Service Officer and Director of Veterans Affairs for the Lumbee tribe of North Carolina. He resides in North Carolina.

**Colonel Raymond Jardine, Jr., DBA, U.S. Army (Retired)
Native Hawaiian**

Dr. Jardine enlisted in the Army in 1971 and retired as a Colonel in December 2003. He was branch qualified in Infantry, Artillery, Military Intelligence, Quartermaster, Aviation, and Military Police, with functional area expertise in Aviation Logistics, Operations, Plans and Training, Maintenance Test Pilot, and a Master Fitness Trainer. During his distinguished military career, Dr. Jardine has served as the Commander, Ground Forces Component Command, Hawaii Airport Security Mission and Force Protection of Critical Infrastructures for the State of Hawaii and as the Deputy Commander, 29th Enhanced Separate Infantry Brigade (Light), leading this brigade from the worst combat brigade in the Nation to number one in readiness in 2003. He has received innumerable medals, awards, and honors for his long distinguished service to his country and state. In 2005, Dr. Jardine was awarded the highest civilian award from the National Guard Association of the United States, the Patrick Henry Award. Dr. Jardine's professional experience includes owning and operating Native Hawaiian Veterans, LLC, which provides a wide variety of services to include homeland security, emergency management, information technology, community relations, public outreach, and professional staff augmentation.

Dr. Jardine holds a Doctorate of Business Administration in Organization Leadership from University of Rockville, Masters Degree in Strategic Studies from the United States Army War College, Masters Degree in Organizational Management from the University of Phoenix Management, Public Administration from San Diego State University, Management from Chaminade University, and an Associate Degree in Liberal Arts from Honolulu Community College. Dr. Jardine resides in Hawaii.

**Sheila Mitchell, U.S. Air Force
African American**

Ms. Mitchell currently serves as President and Chief Executive Officer for Veterans at Your Service, LLC, a Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business that specializes in assisting Veterans in preparing claims for VA benefits. She has served as an Appeals Consultant/Veterans Claims Agent for the Virginia Department of Veterans Services. In addition, Ms. Mitchell has served as a Benefits Counselor at Maryland Center for Veterans Education and Training. Ms. Mitchell served over 9 years on active duty in the U.S. Air Force. While on active duty, she served as a Personnel Affairs Specialist and Military Affairs Supervisor. In this capacity, she supervised and trained five personnel in the administration of several military programs which included the Survivor Benefit Plan, Transition Assistance Program, the Family Support Center, the Air Force Aid Society, and Special Trophies and Awards. Ms. Mitchell was successful in developing a computer program to identify personnel with over 17 years of military service to automatically schedule a pre-retirement counseling appointment.

She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from North Carolina Central University. Ms. Mitchell resides in Virginia.

**Benjamin C. Palacios, Command Sergeant Major, U.S. Army (Retired)
Pacific Islander**

Sergeant Major Benjamin Palacios retired from the United States Army in May 2003 after serving for 32 years. He worked as the Vice President for Green Millennium Industries, Ltd., in Seoul, Korea. In November 2004, He joined the Anteon Corporations as a Business Development Manager for the Pacific region which covers the Republic of Korea, Guam, Japan, and Okinawa. In August 2007, Sergeant Major Palacios relocated back to Guam and opened his own consulting company. He assisted several companies to include COMARK, HNTB, CH2MHILL, and Kellogg Brown and Root and established their businesses on the island. He is an Associate Partner for Doran Capital Partners and opened and managed their office on Guam. He also served as an Advisor for POONGSAN Corporations and HK Industry, Ltd. In December 2009, Sergeant Major Palacios started working for Science Application International Corporation (SAIC) as an Assistant Vice President, Regional Account Manager for Guam and CNMI region.

He is a member of numerous professional organizations to include the Association of the United States Army, the Noncommissioned Officer Association, the AFCEA, and the PPALM. Sergeant Major Palacios resides in Guam.

**Celia Renteria Szelwach, DBA, U.S. Army
Hispanic**

Dr. Szelwach is the founder and director of WOVEN Women Veterans Network, a global online community committed to helping women Veterans and their families successfully

**Sheila Mitchell, U.S. Air Force
African American**

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**Celia Renteria Szelwach, DBA, U.S. Army
Hispanic**

Dr. Szelwach is the founder and director of WOVEN Women Veterans Network, a global online community committed to helping women Veterans and their families successfully

transition from military service. Formerly, she provided project management and technical leadership of public health projects focused on rural, women, and minority Veterans as program manager for a leading health care consulting and research company. As program manager, Dr. Szelwach worked with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the U.S. Department of Labor's Women's Bureau on several initiatives focused on improving access to and quality of care for Veterans. She has over 22 years of experience as an internal and external consultant guiding large-scale change, business partnerships, client and community relations, and organizational communications in industries such as Fortune 100 defense, Fortune 100 food and beverage, durable manufacturing, pharmaceutical, health care, professional services, Federal Government, education, and non-profit. As an officer and senior-rated parachutist in the U.S. Army Transportation Corps at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, Dr. Szelwach coordinated logistics requirements for the 18th Airborne Corps Emergency Operations Center during Desert Storm and managed logistical operations for two humanitarian service deployments in support of Hurricane Andrew disaster relief in Homestead, Florida, and Haitian relief in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. From 2006 to 2009, Dr. Szelwach was appointed by the VA Secretary to serve on the Advisory Committee on Women Veterans. She also completed a 3-year term on the Bay Pines VAMC's Women Veterans Health Committee (WVHC) in St. Petersburg, Florida, and a 1-year term on the WVHC for the Charles George VA Medical Center.

Dr. Szelwach is a Certified Compliance and Ethics Professional and teaches leadership ethics, strategic planning, and entrepreneurship for Montreat College. She holds a B.S. from the United States Military Academy at West Point, an MBA in International Trade from the University of Sarasota, and a Doctor of Business Administration in Management from Argosy University. In 2011, Dr. Szelwach served as primary investigator for "Transitioning to the Civilian Workforce: Issues Impacting the Reentry of Rural Women Veterans" published in the peer-reviewed *Journal of Rural Social Sciences*. She resides in North Carolina.

**Marvin Trujillo, Jr., U.S. Marine Corps
Native American**

Mr. Trujillo is a Laguna Tribal Member who belongs to the Road Runner, Little Parrot, and Turkey Clans. He serves as the Tribal Veterans Service Officer for the Pueblo of Laguna and the Co-Chair of the All Indian Pueblo Council Veterans Committee. Mr. Trujillo entered the United States Navy in 1993, and served 4 years as an Aviation Electronics Technician, Aviation Warfare Specialist 2nd Class Petty Officer. He specialized in the F-14 Tomcat Avionic and Radar Weapons Systems. Mr. Trujillo served multiple tours to the Persian Gulf with Fighter Squadron Eleven (VF-11) on board the USS Independence, USS Carl Vinson, and the USS John C. Stennis. He later entered the Hampton Roads Naval ROTC Unit and went to college at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia. In 2001, Mr. Trujillo graduated with his Bachelors of Science in Communication, and was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps. He later attended Flight Training at Naval Air Station Pensacola and Aviation Maintenance Officer School at Naval Air Station Whiting Field in

Florida. He served with Marine Air Wing Group 13 at Marine Corps Air Station in Yuma, Arizona. Mr. Trujillo was elected and served as the 2nd Lt. Governor for the Pueblo of Laguna in 2009-2010. He served as a member of the Pueblo's Energy Core Team for PNM, Continental Divide Electric Cooperative, and New Mexico Gas Company.

Mr. Trujillo also served as the Ex-Officio to the Laguna Development Corporation, the Mid-Region Council of Government–Metropolitan Transportation Board, the New Mexico State–Tribal Collaboration and Communication Work Group for a Safer New Mexico, and was a member of the All Indian Pueblo Council. Mr. Trujillo resides in New Mexico.